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ABSTRACT

Based on a review of the literature, these guidelines are intended to assist policy planners and decision makers at state and local levels interested in establishing a state system of education service agencies (ESAs) or in modifying an existing system. The report offers an overview of education service agencies and organizes the guidelines into sections on planning, needs assessment, organizational features, implementation, and evaluation. There are three basic types of service agencies: special district ESAs, regionalized ESAs, and cooperative ESAs. While emphasizing that no one way to structure the state networks can be applied with equal effectiveness in all settings, the paper includes traditional arguments for and against each type. The conceptual model presented for development of a state plan follows closely the work of Roger Kaufman. Within each topic, major options available to planners are listed. (WD)

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Planning Models for State Systems of Educational Service Agencies

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES
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PLANNING FOR STATE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES: SOME CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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American Association of Educational Service Agencies/
American Association of School Administrators

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PLANNING FOR STATE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES:
SOME CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATEMENT AND AN OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCY MOVEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STATEMENT

Introduction

The development of effective state school systems structures for elementary-secondary education has in recent years commanded high public and policy interest. In the post-World War II period, two basic approaches to alter, and presumably, to improve the traditional delivery systems in the states have been utilized: the reorganization of local school districts, and the establishment of some form of education service agency to provide services to local units and/or to the state education agency.

The first approach, the reorganization of local school district patterns through the formation of larger administrative units by the merger of two or more local education agencies (LEAs) was extensively used in a majority of states and resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of LEAs in the nation, from approximately 106,000 in 1948 to 17,231 in 1971. In the decade of the seventies, however, that movement has markedly subsided. In 1978, the number of operating districts stood at 15, 913--a reduction of approximately 1200 units from the number operating at the beginning of the decade.[1/]

The use of the second approach, the formation of some form of education service agency (ESA) gained momentum in the mid and late 1960s, the approximate period of the demise of the reorganization of local education agencies alternative. Today, the education service agency movement in its several major forms stands as the dominant development in school government in the nation.

[1/] All data on the number of operating local education agencies were compiled from reports published by the National Center for Educational Statistics, Department of Education, Washington, D.C.

Objectives of This Statement

Since the conflux of conditions which in recent years have precipitated the use of some form of ESA for the improvement of state systems of elementary-secondary education has not subsided, but shows evidence of accelerating in the future, interest in this alternative is expected to grow. The purpose of this statement on planning guidelines is two-fold:

1. To assist policy planners and decision makers at the state and local levels in states not now operating a form of ESA but considering their use by offering guidelines for the development of a state system of units; and,
2. To assist policy planners and decision makers in states presently maintaining a system of ESAs in the assessment of the workings of their systems by identifying what appear to be desirable features for the operation of a state system of ESAs.[1/]

The plan of the paper for achieving these objectives includes both conceptual and methodological considerations viewed to be important for the development and maintenance of a healthy statewide system of education service agencies of whatever form planners chose to implement in a state. Thus, the guidelines are intended to serve as a base upon which planners must add their own considered judgments rather than a blueprint for a perfectly planned network. Moreover, this approach is also consistent with the position taken here

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[1/] These two objectives are viewed to be consistent with the objective of Task III of the contract between the Department of Education and the American Association of Education Service Agencies..."the second monograph on planning will explore, in a nonprescriptive manner, the conceptual and methodological guidelines that should be considered by policy planners as they structure statewide systems of education service agencies or restructure existing networks" (June, 1978).

that there does not appear to be a single best way to structure state networks of ESAs that will apply with equal effectiveness in all state settings. This is so because ESAs of whatever form must be considered within the context of an individual state system of education and thus must reflect the traditions and economic, geographic, demographic and political characteristics of a particular state if they are to be meaningful participants in a state system of elementary-secondary education. Thus, it is not possible to design a universal organizational plan that can be imposed on a particular state irrespective of its traditions and other critical contextual considerations.

Sources Used in the Development of the Guidelines

A number of sources were used in the development of the conceptual and methodological guidelines offered in this paper, particularly:

- The literature on regional development and inter-agency collaboration in education and in other public service fields;
- The literature on management science and organizational theory having particular significance for public corporations of a service nature; and most importantly,
- The following four publications of the recently completed ESA Study Series:

  Report No. I. Education Service Agencies: Status and Trends

  Report No. III. The Establishment and Abolishment of a Statewide System of Education Service Agencies: The Kentucky Experience

  Report No. VI. Factors Influencing Local Education Agency Participation in the Programs and Services of Education Service Agencies in the State of Texas

Report No. VII. Major Policy Issues Surrounding the Education Service Agency Movement and a Proposed Research and Development Agenda.[1/]

II. AN OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES

Introduction

Before preceding with the discussion of planning guidelines, an overview of the education service agency movement is presented below. Highlighted in the overview are: the reasons that seem to account for the widespread interest in the concept, the major form of ESAs emerging in the nation, the extent of use of each, the principal functions of service units, and the traditional arguments used by proponents and opponents of the major types of ESAs.

Reasons for Widespread Interest in the Concept

The widespread interest in the ESA concept is traceable to a large number of frequently interrelated developments that, while they vary from state to state, tend to center on several dominant themes. These themes can be summarized as follows:

- A growing recognition of the political and economic limitations surrounding the move to reorganize small LEAs into larger administrative units;
- A greater recognition that a viable structure for education is a critical requisite for the promotion of educational programming in a state system of education and that the structure of education in many state systems serves as an important constraint on the

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[1/] Stephens Associates, Burtonsville, Maryland, 1979.

attainment of many state and local priorities, especially those related to equality of educational opportunity, efficiency in the provision of programs, and the quality of services.

- A greater recognition that there is a need for more effective research/development/diffusion/evaluation capabilities in state systems of education and that the networks and resource allocations for these purposes are frequently inadequate, fragmented, and uncoordinated in many state systems of education; and,
- A greater recognition of the need to develop more effective planning, communication, and coordination among all levels in the state system if the increasingly interrelated state-local priorities are to be achieved.

Declining enrollments faced by many local agencies have made more pronounced their difficulties in offering a comprehensive educational program. Recent court mandates requiring a state and local response to heretofore unserviced or inadequately served special populations of students have also heightened the search by planners at both levels for improved delivery systems. And, of course, so too have the growing fiscal constraints at all levels forced an examination of alternative ways to provide essential educational programs.

Basic Types of Service Agencies

Three basic forms of ESAs appear to be developing in the large number of states that have chosen this option as a way to improve the delivery of educational services: Stephens has defined the three types as Special District ESAs, Regionalized SEA/ESAs, and Cooperative ESAs. Working definitions of the three types and their primary mission are:

- Special District ESAs. A legally constituted unit of school government setting between the state education agency (SEA) and a collection of LEAs. This pattern appears to be supported by the view that ESAs should be established by the state, or the state and local agencies acting in concert, to provide services for both the SEA and constituent LEAs.
- Regionalized SEA/ESAs. A regional branch of the state education agency. This pattern appears to be supported by the view that ESAs should be established as arms of the state to deliver services for the SEA. Three variations of units of this type are in use: those providing administrative services only; those providing general or specialized instructional services; and, those providing administrative and instructional services.
- Cooperative ESAs. A loose consortium of local education agencies. This pattern appears to be supported by the view that ESAs should be established by two or more local education agencies to provide services exclusively to members of the consortium. Three variations of units of this type presently exist: those that are multi-purpose (provide a comprehensive number of services); limited-purpose (those that provide a small number of services); and, those that are single-purpose.

A recent study of thirty-one state networks of ESAs in twenty-six states used the four broad characteristics of legal framework governance, program and service orientation, and fiscal support as an aid in further distinguishing the three types. The dominant patterns of each concerning these four central features are shown in Table 1.[1/]

[1/] Education Service Agencies: Status and Trends, ESA Study Series Report No. I, Stephens Associates, Burtonsville, Maryland 20730 (Funded by National Institute of Education, Department of Education, Grant #OE-G-72-4449).

TABLE 1

DOMINANT PATTERNS OF TYPES OF ESAs WITH
REGARD TO FOUR CENTRAL CHARACTERISTICS

Type of ESA	Four Central Characteristics			
	Legal Framework	Governance	Programs and Services	Fiscal Support
Special District ESA	tends to be highly structured in legislation and/or SEA regulations	tends to by lay control	tends to be determined by member LEAs and the SEA or by statute	tends to be a mix of local, regional, state and state/federal
Regionalized SEA/ESA	tends to be structured in SEA regulations only	tends to be professional advisory only	tends to be almost exclusively determined by SEA	tends to be almost exclusively state and state/federal
Cooperative ESA	tends to be general (i.e., intergovernmental regulations and statutes) and/or permissive legislation	tends to be composed of representatives of member LEAs	tends to be almost exclusively determined by member LEAs	tends to be almost exclusively local and state/federal

Source:
Major Policy Issues Surrounding the Education Service Agency Movement and a Proposed Research and Development Agenda, ESA Study Series Report No. VII, Stephens Associates, June 1979, p. 3.

Extent of Use of the Three Basic Forms

While few pure illustrations exist, each of the basic forms of ESAs is presently used singularly, or in combination, in a large number of states. Eleven states have established either complete statewide systems of Special District ESA or include nearly all of their local education agencies in the state network. These states and the title of the agencies, the year they were established, and the number of units in each network are shown in Table 2. The eleven states are regarded to represent all of the state systems of this type operating in the nation.

Also shown in Table 2 are the seven state systems of Regionalized ESAs that are regarded to represent the most extensive use of this form of service unit. While many state education agencies have regularly decentralized some services and functions, the five states cited are thought to be the total of the more limited number who have established regional branches to serve the entire state. Similarly, educational cooperatives have also been in existence for a long period of time. However, some states have moved to formalize this practice. The thirteen Cooperative ESA networks cited in Table 2 are viewed to be the most extensive in the nation.

As cited previously, the establishment of ESAs represents a relatively recent structural modification in school government. This point is illustrated in the trend line highlighted in Figure 1 that depicts the year of establishment of the thirty-one major ESA networks in the nation at the present time.

Major Functions of the Networks

The three types of service agencies exhibit both similarities and differences in their programming activities. These patterns emerged in the descriptive study of thirty-one ESA networks cited previously. As shown in Table 3,

TABLE 2

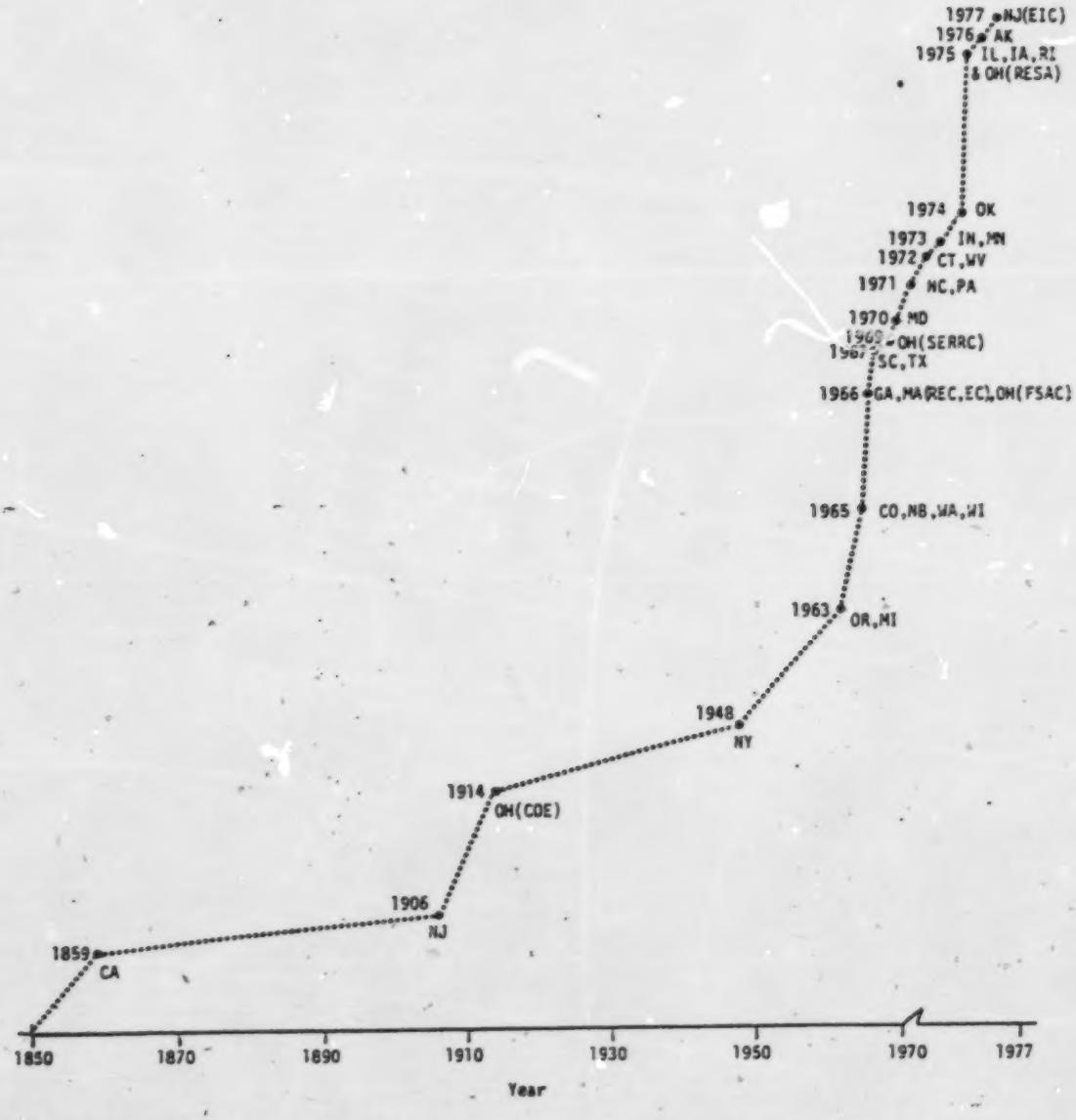
MAJOR STATEWIDE NETWORKS OF ESAs, YEAR OF INITIAL ESTABLISHMENT, NUMBER OF UNITS IN NETWORK, AND TITLE OF UNITS, 1980

Type of ESA and State	Number of Units in State	Year Initially Established	Title of Units
Type A: SPECIAL DISTRICT ESA			
1. California	58	1859	Office of County Superintendent of Schools
2. Illinois	58	1975	Educational Service Region
3. Iowa	15	1975	Area Education Agency
4. Michigan	58	1963	Intermediate School District
5. New York[a/]	44	1948	Board of Cooperative Educational Services
6. Ohio (COE)	87	1914	County Office of Education
7. Oregon	29	1963	Education Service District
8. Pennsylvania	29	1971	Intermediate Unit
9. Texas	20	1967	Regional Educational Service Center
10. Washington	9	1965	Educational Service District
11. Wisconsin	19	1965	Cooperative Education Service Agency
Type B: REGIONALIZED SEA/ESA			
1. Massachusetts (REC)	6	1966	Regional Education Center
2. New Jersey (EIC)	4	1977	Educational Improvement Center
3. New Jersey (CSS)	21	1906	County Superintendent of Schools
4. Ohio (SERRC)	16	1969	Special Education Regional Resource Center
5. Ohio (FSAC)	13	1966	Field Services Area Coordinator
6. North Carolina	8	1971	Regional Education Center
7. Oklahoma	20	1974	Regional Education Service Center
Type C: COOPERATIVE ESA			
1. Alaska	5	1976	Regional Resource Center
2. Colorado[a/]	17	1965	Boards of Cooperative Services
3. Connecticut	6	1972	Regional Educational Service Center
4. Georgia	16	1966	Cooperative Education Service Agency
5. Indiana	4	1973	Education Service Center
6. Maryland[a/]	1	1970	Regional Education Service Agency
7. Massachusetts (ED)[a/]	44	1966	Educational Collaborative
8. Minnesota	9	1973	Educational Cooperative Service Unit
9. Nebraska	19	1965	Educational Service Unit
10. Ohio (RESA)[a/]	4	1975	Regional Education Service Agency
11. Rhode Island	9	1975	Regional Vocational Technical Facility
12. South Carolina[a/]	3	1967	Education Service Center
13. West Virginia	8	1972	Regional Education Service Agency

Note:
a/ Not statewide in scope.

FIGURE 1

YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THIRTY-ONE MAJOR ESA NETWORKS



Source:

Education Service Agencies: Status and Trends, ESA Study Series, Report No. I, Stephens Associates, June, 1979, p. 54.

TABLE 3

RANKING OF TWENTY-SIX PROGRAM AREAS
BY NUMBER OF ESAs OFFERING PROGRAM

Program Area	Ranking by Number of ESAs Offering Program Area			
	All ESAs	Special District ESAs	Regionalized SEA/ESAs	Cooperative ESAs
General ESA Administration	1	3	4	1
Education of Pupils with Handicapping Conditions	1	1	1	3
Vocational/Occupational Education	10	6	14	14
Adult Education	21	19	21	20
Alternative Schools	26	26	16	19
Bilingual Education	25	24	20	23
General Academic Instruction	19	22	8	16
Gifted/Talented Education	9	14	2	13
Migrant Education	24	25	15	15
Outdoor/Environmental Education	23	23	22	22
Pre-Kindergarten Education	11	17	9	12
Pupil Personnel Services	15	10	17	16
Curriculum Services	5	5	4	5
Media and Library Services	3	2	6	4
Staff Development	4	4	2	2
Planning Services	7	11	9	8
Research and Development	17	21	9	10
Evaluation Services	8	16	7	7
Data Processing Services	15	6	23	18
Personnel Services	20	18	17	26
Purchasing Services	12	12	26	6
Transportation Services	18	15	23	24
Financial Services	13	8	13	24
Information Services	6	9	9	7
Legislative Services	22	20	25	20
Federal Programs	14	13	17	11

programs for handicapped children and youth was ranked first by all three types of service units. Other highly ranked services by all three types were: curriculum services, media and library services, staff development; and information services.

However, differences in the type and comprehensiveness of programs between the three types of units were also noted when the activities of the units are grouped according to direct instructional services offered to students enrolled in public LEAs, instructional support services offered to the staffs of public LSAs, management services offered to public LEAs, services provided for the state education agency, and services offered to nonpublic schools. For example, the Special District ESA units tended to have the most comprehensive services with regard to:

- direct instructional services to students enrolled in public LEAs (i.e., education of pupils with handicapping conditions, vocational-technical education, adult education, bilingual education, general academic instruction, gifted/talented, migrant education, and pupil personnel services);
- instructional support services (i.e., pupil diagnoses/prescription, curriculum services, media and library services, and professional staff development);
- a range of management services (i.e., data processing);
- a range of services for the state education agency; and,
- a range of services for nonpublic schools.

Few Regionalized SEA/ESAs offered direct instructional services to students enrolled in public LEAs. Prominent in the activities of these units were: research and development services, planning services, and selected management services.

FIGURE 2

SIX MAJOR CATEGORIES OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES OFFERED BY ESAs

Category #1	Category #2	Category #3	Category #4	Category #5	Category #6
Direct Instructional Services to Students Enrolled in Public LEAs	Instructional Support Services to Staff of Public Leas	Management Services to Public Leas	Services to the State Education Agency	Services to Nonpublic Schools	Services to Agencies Other Than LEAs and SEA
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
major illustrations	major illustrations	major illustrations	major illustrations	major illustrations	major illustrations
•education of handicapped children •vocational/ occupational •pupil personnel •bilingual •migrant •gifted/ talented •outdoor/ environmental •adult education	•curriculum consultant •media and library •information •staff development	•purchasing •data processing •planning •research and development •evaluation •information •federal program coordination	•media and library •data processing •information •financial services	•curriculum development •media and library •staff development •data processing •education of handicapped children •vocational/ occupational	•adult education •staff development •management services

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Cooperative ESA units, on the other hand, tended to concentrate on: direct instructional services, especially the education of children with handicapped conditions; indirect instructional services, especially media and library and professional staff development; and, a limited range of management services, most typically centralized purchasing.

Rationale for Program Patterns

While differences in primary program emphasis exist between types of service units, a common rationale would appear to explain the involvement of units of whatever type in the delivery of services cited above. In part, this rationale can be explained by a number of common prerequisites of many of the programs offered such as the following:

- a required high degree of staff specialization (as, for example, in the cases of programs and services for handicapped children, vocational/technical education, curriculum consultants, media services, data processing, and research and development and evaluation services);
- a required high degree of specialization of facilities and equipment (as, for example, in the cases of vocational/technical education and data processing);
- a required high degree of research and development and evaluation and diffusion expertise (as, for example, in the cases of curriculum consultant and planning services);
- substantial start-up and operating costs (as, for example, in the cases of vocational/technical education, and computer services); and,
- a required minimal student population (as, for example, in the cases of programs for handicapped and migrant children).

Other important rationale developed by state and/or local planners for the use of service agencies appears to be:

- a desire to improve the state-local partnership by facilitating the establishment of platforms for the resolution of state-substate-local interests and for the improvement of policy coordination and cooperation;
- a desire to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of a statewide long-range planning capability, or statewide research, development, evaluation, and diffusion capability;
- a desire to facilitate the best use of state and/or federal-state resources in delivering state and/or federal-state priorities;
- a desire to facilitate the removal of inequities in local school district instructional programming due to limitations of enrollment or financial resources, other constraints;
- equally significant, a desire to facilitate the improvement of the quality of LEA instructional programming; and,
- a desire to facilitate the provision of high quality, efficient, and economical LEA management services.

Traditional Arguments of Proponents and Opponents of Each Type

Each type of ESA has its proponents and opponents. The principal arguments offered by proponents of Special District ESA units appear to center on the following themes: (1) they can facilitate the provision of easily accessible, definite, and largely self-determined supplemental and support services to local education agencies; (2) they can contribute to the equalization of educational opportunity with efficiency and economy; (3) they can serve as an important platform for the resolution of local, regional, and state needs;

(4) they can contribute to the development of a statewide research, development, evaluation, and dissemination network in a state and promote the concentration and best use of resources to foster the network once it is in place; and, (5) they can contribute to the establishment of a statewide network of resident change agents possessing both authenticity and legal mandates to effect change in the workings of the state school system on a regular and planned basis. The thrusts of the concerns raised by opponents of the Special District form of ESA appear to be the following: (1) the provision of services by a comprehensive service agency can perpetuate marginal local school districts if countering statutorial and regulatory directives are absent; (2) they could create an unnecessary additional layer of school government which might not be responsive to the needs of either the member LEAs or the state education agency if the decision-making processes for their operation do not have adequate checks-and-balances; (3) they can be potential competitors of LEAs for financial resources; (4) where arrangements for LEA and the SEA input on planning is absent or weak, potential dysfunctions in the organization and programs of the units are highly probable; and, (5) the establishment of units possessing generally acceptable design features would ordinarily require mandatory legislation, a prospect generally having difficult, limited political feasibility.

The themes of the main arguments advanced by advocates of the use of Regionalized SEA/ESAs are viewed to be the following: (1) the state has the ultimate responsibility for the education of school-age children and youth--it follows that the administrative arm of the state, the SEA, should provide necessary programs and services that cannot be provided locally; (2) the provision of programs and services by the SEA will more likely result in the best use of state monies for the furtherance of state priorities; (3) programs and services by the SEA will tend to reduce administrative costs to an acceptable minimum

than would be true if monies were passed through another unit of school government; and, (4) the provision of services by the SEA would more likely result in improved communication between the provider of the services, the SEA, and the consumers of the services, the LEAs. The principal arguments advanced by those who oppose this alternative, center on the following themes: (1) the operation of programs and services by the SEA may distract the state unit from its generally accepted roles--those of providing leadership, co-ordination, and planning for the state school system, serving as the princiapl advocate for elementary-secondary education, and functioning as the legal monitoring unit of the state system; (2) the operation of programs and services by the SEA may tend to seriously drain human and fiscal resources from the agency; (3) the provision of programs and services by the SEA may promote undesirable standardization; (4) the impact of services may be lessened because of built-in conflict with the numerous regulatory roles that the agency must perform; (5) in most state school systems, there appears to be far too many LEAs to be adequately served by the SEA; and, (6) local control of education may be further eroded.

The major arguments advanced by advocates of Cooperative ESAs appear to focus on these themes: (1) local units could potentially have access to necessary programs and services while retaining their full legal and political identity; (2) the membership of the consortium would tend to have maximum freedom to buy into the cooperative only that which it held to be essential in meeting local needs and priorities; (3) the cooperative would ordinarily be subject to annual renewal and thus could be dissolved with relative ease; (4) because the cooperative is clearly a creature of the contributing LEAs, it would tend to be highly responsive and accountable; and, (5) the cooperative would ordinarily function with little or no external intervention. The principal arguments of those who

are opposed to this form of service unit center their opposition on the following themes: (1) the usual short-term nature of cooperative agreements tends to make such arrangements highly vulnerable to changes in the make-up and/or attitudes of governing boards, administrators, and operating personnel of the participatory units thus placing a serious constraint on necessary continuity and long-range planning; (2) the usual absence of a permanent structure to promote cooperation by itself contributes to a lack of interest or lack of incentive to cooperate; (3) the recruitment and retention of quality personnel tends to be inhibited by the short-term contractual nature of a cooperative; and, (4) in many instances, the legal constraints on the operations of a cooperative, versus a more conventional legal entity, can seriously limit its effectiveness, particularly with regard to the acquisition of necessary facilities and equipment.

CHAPTER TWO

GUIDELINES FOR PLANNING STATE SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION SERVICE AGENCIES

I. INTRODUCTION

Special Difficulties in Planning for a State System of ESAs

Planning state systems of education service agencies represents one of the most difficult challenges in elementary-secondary education. This is so for three principal reasons. In the first instance, the relative newness of the concept and the relatively meager literature on the movement denies planners a historical perspective and a substantial body of evidence concerning the workings of service type agencies.

Compounding this fact is the increasing awareness that there probably is no best way to structure service agencies that will apply with equal effectiveness in all state and local settings. That is, as established previously, ESAs must be considered within the context of the traditions, and economic, geographic, demographic, and political characteristics of a particular state if they are to be meaningful partners in efforts to improve the scope and quality of education.

Thirdly, the potential use of service agencies forces a consideration of a large number of complex policy issues, many of which presently lack a clear consensus in the debate surrounding school governance. For example, consideration of the role and function of services units should be one of the first questions addressed by those responsible for planning a state network. Yet, this issue cannot be adequately answered until a consensus is reached regarding the primary role and function of other legal partners in the state system. Thus, one is forced to establish what the consensus policy is regarding the role of

the state education agency, local school districts, and other existing units providing direct or support services in elementary-secondary education. The difficulty of this essential first step is of course reduced where meaningful policy positions enumerating roles and functions of actors presently exists. Where they do not, the initial phase of planning must include such critical and fundamental considerations. Other volatile policy issues that must of necessity emerge early in the planning for ESAs where consensus is paramount, but frequently difficult to achieve, concern the potential impact of ESAs on the traditional state-local partnership concept that exists in a particular state, how the units are to be governed, and how they are to be financed.

While these kinds of considerations are formidable, the conditions impacting on the delivery of educational services in state systems of education are increasingly challenging the workings of most systems. Planners are being confronted with making decisions regarding the best way to improve the delivery of services. The guidelines which follow are intended to aid these efforts.

Organization of the Guidelines

The guidelines have been grouped into the five planning phases shown in Figure 3. This organization provides a useful conceptual model for development of the state plan. The conceptual model selected follows closely that proposed by Roger Kaufman.[1/] While other excellent conceptual planning models are available for use here, the Kaufman approach was chosen primarily because of its great utility in prompting the structuring of a logic problem-solving process for the identification and solution of the complex issues attendant with the establishment and operation of a state system of education service agencies.

1/ Kaufman, Roger A., Educational Systems Planning, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972.

FIGURE 3

PLANNING PHASES USED IN DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV	Phase V
Planning for the Plan	Determination and Need and Selection of Solution Alternative	Determination of Organizational Features of Network	Implementation of State Plan	Evaluation of State System

Topics Included in Each Phase

The following major topics are considered in each phase of the planning guidelines:

Phase I: PLANNING FOR THE PLAN

- Determination of Lead Initiating Agency
- Who Should be Involved?
- Establishment of Committee Review Processes
- Deciding on Project Support Staff
- Development of Tentative Time-Line for Project
- Establishment of Project Budget Support Base

Phase II: DETERMINATION OF NEED AND SELECTION OF SOLUTION ALTERNATIVE

- Needs Assessment
- Selection of Solution Alternative

Phase III: DETERMINATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES OF NETWORK

- Establishment Procedures
- Geographic Boundaries

Public Local Education Agency Affiliation

Governance Features

Specific Programs and Services

Financial Operations of Units

The Chief Executive Officer

Staffing Arrangements

Housing the Units

Checks and Balances on the Network

ESA-SEA Relations

Phase IV: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE PLAN

Determination of Legal Mode of Implementation

Selection of Incremental or Complete Strategy

Phase V: EVALUATION OF THE STATE NETWORK

Type of Evaluation: Self or External

What Should be Included?

Who Should be Involved?

Frequency of the Assessment

Approach Used in Discussion of Topics

The discussion of each topic or cluster of related topics is restricted to a statement on the major options that appear to be available to planners in structuring the state system. No preferences are indicated, consistent with the thesis made here that there probably is no best way to structure a network that can be superimposed universally in all states.

The options are stated in outline form with the hope that this format will facilitate their use almost as a checklist of topics that ought to be considered in the development of a state plan. Moreover, emphasis in the statement

on options was given to Phase III Determination of Organizational Features. This was done because it is at this phase of the work of planners where most conflict will arise. Additionally, it is at this critical stage where the likely success or failure of the planned network is probably pre-determined. The options cited in this section of the statement in large part were drawn from the recently completed ESA Study Series. It is believed to be the most comprehensive statement of alternative organizational features for ESA type agencies yet developed.

Suggested Criteria for Use in Evaluating Options

Many of the options cited will likely generate support or opposition from many sources but especially from the two principal units of school government having potentially the greatest stack in the proposed network of education service agencies—the system of local education agencies and the state education agency. While the debate over how best to structure the ESA network will not always be popularized, it is important that planners recognize that the two do have differing and frequently competing needs in their respective environments. These differences will of course result in differing perspectives that each will bring to a discussion of alternatives.

The statements which follow attempt to focus on the major factors that the state and local agencies are likely to regard as paramount. To round out the debate, it is also critical to recognize that educational service agencies, as organizational entities, also have needs and these too must be considered by planners.

State education agencies would likely test alternative organization features from the perspective of the degree which a feature is viewed to either facilitate or inhibit the following major governance, administrative, and programming goals of long-standing in most, if not all, states:

- policy development and coordination among all units of school government
- an effective state regulatory system
- a statewide long-range planning capability
- a statewide research, development, and evaluation capability
- a statewide dissemination capability
- a statewide communication capability
- the best uses of state resources for the achievement of statewide priorities
- equality of opportunity for both general and special student populations
- high quality programming for both bases and support service areas
- high quality instructional and administrative personnel in the states' schools

Local education agencies, on the other hand, would be likely evaluate alternative organizational features of an ESA network from the perspective of the degree which a feature is judged to facilitate or inhibit the following almost universal governance, administrative, and programming needs:

- the maintenance of a degree of autonomy in policy development
- flexibility in programming to meet locally determined priorities
- flexibility in staffing
- the best use of local resources for the achievement of locally established priorities
- the provision of external support efforts that are based on the needs of the local districts

- the provision of external support efforts that are definite, reliable, and accessible
- the provision of external support efforts that complement the districts' activities and are not in competition with their functions
- the provision of external support efforts that are of equal or superior quality in programming and staffing than that possible by the districts
- the provision of mechanisms that make possible the substantial involvement of the districts in the decision processes of external support efforts

As an organizational entity, the requirements of a structurally sound education service agency must also be given serious consideration in the debate over optional ESA organizational features. The following appear to be of paramount interest of a healthy ESA.

- an adequate legal framework in order to insure legitimacy of members of the state system of education
- a reasonable degree of organizational stability in order to promote continuity in programming and staffing
- a reasonable degree of organizational flexibility in order to respond to regional differences
- a clear, unambiguous mission
- ability to develop high quality programming
- ability to develop high quality staffing
- a reasonable degree of fiscal independence and fiscal stability

These three sets of perspectives must be considered at all times in the debate over alternative organizational features. The statements can be easily operationalized and thus serve as valuable criteria for use by planners. Their

use ought to elevate the quality of the discussions. The statements clearly reflect a set of values. Those responsible for planning a state system of ESAs must ultimately decide which values they wish to maximize.

PHASE I: PLANNING FOR THE PLAN

Introduction

The completion of a number of pre-planning activities is regarded to be essential for the successful development of a state plan for educational service agencies, as would be true for any comparable planning exercise. Typical pre-planning activities include: determination of what agency is to assume the primary initiating role; resolution of what topics are to be included in the state plan; deciding who should be involved; establishing an orientation schedule for the planning committee; determination of the review processes for the work of the planning committee; making decisions concerning how the work of the committee is to be accomplished; developing a tentative time-line for the project; and, establishing a project budget support base. A number of major options on each of these pre-planning activities are outlined below.

Determination of Lead Initiating Agency

Major options include:

- the state education agency
- another unit of the executive branch of state government
- a unit of the legislative branch of state government
- a collaborative of local education agencies
- an institute of higher education
- a combination of two or more of the above

Topics to be Included in State Plan

Major options include:

- development of a comprehensive plan that typically includes consideration of all remaining four phases of the planning cycle used here (determination of need, proposals dealing with all organizational and operational features, proposed implementation schedule and procedures, and proposed evaluation procedures).
- development of a limited plan that typically includes consideration of need for the network, and only a minimal proposed organizational and operational plan
- a combination of the above depending on project resource availability

Who Should Be Involved?

Major options concerning the composition of a planning committee include:

- the state education agency
- other state government agencies that might be affected (e.g., health, manpower, planning)
- public local school districts
- nonpublic schools, if potentially affected
- post secondary institutions
- general professional organizations (e.g., administrators, teachers, governing boards)
- specialized professional interest groups that might be affected (e.g., vocational/technical, media, special education, computer)
- non-educational interest groups having a primary interest in education (e.g., PTA, League of Women Voters)
- a combination of two or more of the above

Establishment of Committee Orientation Processes

Major options include:

- internal reviews of major needs of state system of education
- external reviews of major needs of state system of education
- on-site committee visits to diverse ESA operations in other states
- presentations by consultants from diverse ESA operations in other states
- a combination of two or more of the above depending on project resource availability

Establishment of Committee Review Processes

Major options include:

- internal review of committee proposal only
- limited external hearings on committee proposals
- comprehensive external hearings on committee proposals
- force-field analysis of committee proposals
- Delphi exercises on committee proposals
- a combination of two or more of the above depending on project resource availability

Deciding on Project Support Staff

Major options include:

- use of staff of initiating organization
- use of staff specialists from existing education agencies on released-time
- use of a contract
- a combination of two or more of the above depending on project resource availability

Development of a Tentative Time-Line for Project

Major options include:

- a comprehensive statement of the sequence of all proposed project activities and the estimated amount of time each task will consume (e.g., construction of a Program Evaluation and Review Technique), and the determination of the minimum and maximum time needed to complete each proposed activity (e.g., construction of a Critical Path Method), plus the establishment of a time schedule for proposed tasks that must be completed (e.g., the construction of a Calendar of Events)
- a limited statement on the sequence, duration, and time schedule

Establishment of a Profit Budget Support Base

Major options include seeking project support monies from:

- the state legislature
- existing state education agency appropriations
- federal grants to the states earmarked for functional areas to be treated in plan (e.g., handicapped, and vocational/technical)
- a combination of two or all of the above

PHASE II: DETERMINATION OF NEED AND SELECTION OF SOLUTION ALTERNATIVE

Introduction

The identification of the problem for which the proposed state network of education service agencies is to respond is the most critical phase of planning. The need in this instance is defined to mean the discrepancy that exists between an acceptable standard and an observed level of performance by all actors in the state system of elementary-secondary education. A needs assessment is one

valuable technique for establishing the discrepancy between what is the current and projected condition of elementary-secondary education in a state and what ought to be. Completion of a needs assessment will then facilitate the choice of the best alternative form of ESAs to use in assisting in the removal of existing and projected discrepancy. A number of major options concerning these two steps are outlined below.

Needs Assessments

Major options include:

- a comprehensive assessment of the discrepancy between the present condition at all levels in the state system and what ought to be thru the use of interviews, surveys, opinionnaires, analysis of existing studies, and new studies
- a limited assessment of the discrepancy between the present condition at all levels and what ought to be (limited both in content and methodologies employed)
- a limited or comprehensive assessment of projected economic, social, and political developments in the world, nation, and state that will potentially impact on all levels of the state system

Selection of Solution Alternative

Major options include:

- propose the establishment of a network of Special District ESAs having a primary mission of providing administrative and/or instructional services to both local education agencies and the state education agency or one or the other
- propose the establishment of a network of Regionalized SEA/ESA having a primary mission of providing administrative and/or

instructional services exclusively for the agency or for both the agency and local education agencies

- propose the establishment of a network of Cooperative ESAs having a primary mission of providing both administrative and instructional services exclusively for members of the consortium or for both members of the consortium and the state education agency
- propose the simultaneous establishment of two or all three of the above

PHASE III: DETERMINATION OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES OF THE ESA NETWORK

Introduction

A large number of organizational features of the proposed network must also be addressed. These include proposals regarding: establishment procedures; geographic boundaries; public local education agency affiliation: governance features; programs and services; financing; chief executive officers; staffing; physical facilities; checks and balances; and, relations with the SEA. A number of major options concerning each of these topics are presented below.

Establishment Procedures

Major options for establishing the initial network include:

- passage of mandatory legislation
- passage of permissive legislation
- issuance of executive order by governor
- action by state board of education
- action by state education agency
- action by regional planning boards
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options for creating new units to the initial network include:

- initiation by petition of one or more LEA boards, ESA governing board or SEA directive, order by chief state school officer or state board of education or legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- approval by majority vote of LEA boards, majority vote of LEA board members, the ESA governing boards of affected units, the chief state school officer of state board of education or legislature,
- a combination of two or more of the above
- a combination of one or more procedures from the two categories

Major options for dissolving one or more ESAs include:

- initiation by petition of one or more LEA boards, ESA or SEA hearing on LEA petition or SEA directive, order by chief state school officer or state board of education or legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- approval by majority vote of LEA boards or majority vote of LEA board members, ESA governing board, the chief state school officer or state board of education or legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- a combination of one or more procedures from each of the two categories

Geographic Boundaries

Major options for establishing the initial boundaries include:

- make use of no criteria
- exclusive use of public LEA characteristics such as: size of enrollment, number of districts, number of professional personnel, travel time in hours or miles from ESA center, coterminous boundaries with LEAs, a combination of two or more of the above

- exclusive use of other characteristics such as: size of general population, financial resource base, coterminous boundaries with counties or other substate economic, human resources planning or programming regions, accessibility to other educational resources, presence of metropolitan area, a combination of two or more of the above
- a combination of one or more public LEA or other characteristics

Major options for <u>altering</u> the boundaries of an ESA include:

- petition by one or more LEA boards, ESA or SEA hearing, order by chief state school officer or state board of education or legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- approval by majority vote of LEA boards, majority vote of LEA board members, ESA governing board, chief state school officer or state board of education or legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- a combination of one or more procedures from each of the two categories

<u>Public Local Education Agency Affiliation</u>

Major options for establishing the <u>initial</u> membership status include:

- legislative or state agency mandated membership prescribed for all districts in state
- legislative or state agency mandated membership prescribed for all districts in state except very large urban
- legislative or state agency voluntary membership prescribed for all districts
- legislative or state agency voluntary membership prescribed for all districts except very large urban

Major options for altering local district membership status include:

- petition by LEA board, hearing by ESA governing board or chief state school officer or state board of education, order by chief state school officer or state board of education, legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- approval by majority vote of LEA boards, majority vote of LEA board members, the ESA board, chief state school officer or state board of education or legislature, a combination of two or more of the above
- a combination of one or more procedures from each of the two categories above

Governance Features

Major options concerning the role and function of governing boards for policy development include:

- complete autonomy for policy development for programs, staffing, financing, housing, and other operational features
- shared authority for policy development with member LEAs, the SEA or other governmental units, a combination of the above

Major options concerning the method of selection of members of the governing boards include:

- election of lay members by general election at-large, general election/specified districts based on equal population, general election/specified districts based on other criteria, general election/combination of specified districts and at-large, one vote per member of LEA boards, weighted vote for member of LEA boards
- appointment of lay or professional members by ESA chief executive officer, chief state school officer, state board of education,

LEA chief executive officers having equal or weighted vote, resolution of LEA governing board having one vote or weighted vote per member

- a combination of one or more procedures from each of the two categories above

Major options concerning the number of members include:

- a fixed number
- unlimited number, one member or weighted member from each LEA
- limited number, one member or weighted number from each LEA

Major options concerning the term of office of members include:

- none
- one year
- two years
- three years
- other protracted years

Major options concerning restrictions on the number of terms of members include:

- none
- one term
- two consecutive terms
- three consecutive terms
- other protracted number of terms

Major options concerning the qualifications of members include:

- none for lay elected or lay or professional appointed
- established for lay elected such as voter resident of member LEA, prior experience as member of LEA board

- established for lay or professional appointed such as current member of LEA governing board, current staff member or chief executive officer of LEA

Major options concerning the compensation of members include:

- none
- travel costs for attendance at board meeting only
- other expenses for attendance at board meetings only
- travel costs for all official board activities
- other expenses for all official board activities
- an unlimited or fixed rate per diem for attendance at board meetings
- an unlimited or fixed rate per diem for all official board activities

Major options concerning the use of and method of selection of ex officio members of the board include:

- have no ex officio members
- elected by ESA governing board, LEA boards having weighted or equal vote, chief executive officers of LEAs having weighted or equal vote
- appointed by ESA governing board, LEA boards having weighted or equal vote, chief executive officers of LEAs having weighted or equal vote, or state education agency
- a combination of elected and appointed procedures

Major options concerning the use of method of selection, and role and function of permanent or ad hoc general or functional advisory bodies

- have no general or functional advisory bodies
- elected general or functional advisory bodies by LEA boards having weighted or equal vote, chief executive officers of LEAs having weighted or equal vote

- appointed by ESA governing board, LEA boards having weighted or equal vote, chief executive officers of LEAs having weighted or equal vote
- limited (advisory only) authority of advisory bodies or comprehensive (review and/or approval) responsibilities

Specific Programs and Services

Major options concerning authorization to offer as program or services include:

- none
- authorization by ESA governing board
- authorization by LEA boards
- authorization by SEA
- authorization by other regional or state agency
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning criteria for allocation of functions to ESAs include:

- none
- determined by ESA governing board
- determined by LEA boards
- determined by SEA
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning types of programs and services offered include:

- direct instructional services to students enrolled in public LEAs
- instructional support services to staff of public LEA
- management services to public LEAs
- direct instructional, instructional support, or management services to nonpublic schools

- direct instructional, instructional support, or management services jointly with other agencies
- instructional support or management services for the SEA
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning joint programming with other agencies include:

- none
- authorization by ESA governing board only
- authorization by ESA governing board with approval or concurrence of SEA
- authorization by ESA governing board with approval or concurrence of other regional or state agency

Financial Operations of Units

Major options concerning sources of funding for ESA include:

- eligible to unilaterally levy limited or unlimited tax
- eligible to levy limited or unlimited tax with approval of voters or other governmental jurisdiction
- eligible to receive state appropriations
- eligible to receive federal monies
- eligible to receive gifts and grants
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning required involvement of groups in the budget planning processes include:

- none
- LEA chief executive officers
- LEA boards
- other local and regional governmental jurisdictions

- ESA advisory bodies
- ESA governing board
- SEA
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning required budget approvals include:

- none
- majority of voters
- majority of LEA governing boards
- weighted or equal vote of LEA board members
- weighted or equal vote of LEA executive officers
- other local or regional governmental jurisdictions
- SEA or state board of education or other state agency
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning sources of state aid include:

- none
- general fund
- special tax
- special appropriation
- federal grants
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning variables for use in state formula for funding ESAs include:

- none
- general population
- student population
- student participation in ESA programs
- cost of ESA operation

- wealth of LEAs
- effort of LEAs
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning designation ESA or sole recipients for state and/or state federal funds include:

- none
- fixed in SEA regulations
- discretionary authority of SEA

Major options concerning the conditions and/or limits of state aid include:

- percent of service expenditure
- matching
- pleased reduction
- equipment
- salaries
- minimum number of pupils
- minimum number of districts
- maximum cost
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning methods of allocating costs for ESA services include:

- cost based on participation such as: per pupil served, per staff member served, percent of time, or limit cost
- cost based on other factors such as: student population of LEA, wealth of LEA, or equal amount each LEA
- a combination of one or more from each of the two categories

Major options concerning method of payment to ESA for services offered include:

- each payment from LEA
- cash and state aid credited to LEA
- full or partial payment by state
- federal aid direct or pass-thru state
- ESA tax
- payment by local or regional governmental jurisdiction
- student fees

Major options concerning accounting and auditing procedures, annual budget planning calendar, and borrowing and investing practices include:

- none
- required by statute or SEA regulation but same as LEAs
- required by statute or SEA regulation but different from LEAs

The Chief Executive Officer

Major options concerning the method of selection include:

- elected by voters in LEA, governing boards of LEAs, executive officers of LEAs
- appointed by governing board of ESA, executive officers or governing boards of LEAs, or the state education agency with no approval or concurrence of another agency
- appointed by governing board of ESA, executive officers or governing boards of LEAs or the state education agency with approval or concurrence of another agency

Major options concerning the qualifications of the chief executive officer include:

- none

- established unilaterally by ESA governing board
- fixed by statute or SEA regulation and same as for administrator of LEA
- fixed by statute or SEA regulation and different from administrator of LEA
- a combination of two or three of the above

Major options concerning the term of office include:

- one year
- two years
- three years
- other protracted years

Major options concerning salary and fringe benefits of the executive officer include:

- fixed by statute or SEA regulation
- established by ESA governing board acting unilaterally
- based on practices of LEAs or other comparable officials
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning the evaluation of executive officers include:

- no formal evaluation required
- annual or other periodic evaluation required by statute or SEA regulation, content unspecified specified, and groups involved unspecified or specified
- annual or other periodic evaluation required by ESA by-law, content unspecified or specified, and groups involved unspecified or specified

Major options concerning the role and function of executive officers include:

- none specified

- established in statute or SEA regulation
- established in ESA by-laws
- a combination of statute, SEA regulations and ESA by-laws

Staffing Arrangements

Major options concerning the appointment of staff include:

- appointed unilaterally by ESA governing board on recommendation of chief executive officer
- appointed by ESA governing board on recommendation of chief executive officer with approval or concurrence of another agency

Major options concerning the qualifications of staff include:

- none
- established unilaterally by ESA governing board
- fixed by statute or SEA regulation and same as staff of LEA
- fixed by statute or SEA regulation and different from staff of LEA
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning tenure practices include:

- none
- established unilaterally by ESA governing board
- fixed by statute or SEA regulation and same as staff of LEA
- fixed by statute or SEA regulation and different from staff of LEA
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning collective bargaining contracts include:

- none
- established unilaterally by ESA governing board
- fixed by statute and same as LEA
- fixed by statute and different from LEA
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning required staff development programs include:

- none
- established unilaterally by ESA governing board
- required by statute or SEA regulation at a fixed percentage of budget

Major options concerning staff salaries and fringe benefits include:

- fixed by statute or SEA regulation
- established unilaterally by ESA governing board
- based on practices of LEAs or other comparable positions
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning the evaluation of staff include:

- no formal evaluation required
- annual or other periodic evaluation required by statute or SEA regulations, content unspecified or specified, and groups involved unspecified or specified
- annual or other periodic evaluation required by ESA by-law, content unspecified or specified, and groups involved unspecified or specified

Major options concerning joint appointments of ESA staff with other agencies include:

- none
- authorization by ESA governing board only
- authorization by ESA governing board with approval or concurrence of SEA

Housing the Units

Major options concerning acquisition of facilities include:

- no authority to own, lease, or lease-purchase facilities

- authorization to own facilities by referendum passed by majority of voters, approval by majority of LEA baords, or by ESA governing board, or by local or regional funding agency, or by SEA or other state funding agency, or by a combination of two or more of the above
- authorization to lease or lease-purchase facilities approved by majority of LEA boards, ESA governing board, SEA or by a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning sources of funding for acquisition of space include:

- none
- LEA appropriations
- state appropriations on an equal basis
- state appropriations on a weighted basis
- federal grants
- regional tax by referendum passed by majority of voters, approval by majority of LEA boards, or by ESA governing board, or by SEA
- gifts
- a combination of two or more of the above

Major options concerning authorization to use satellite centers include:

- none
- approval by LEA boards, by ESA governing board, or by SEA

Checks and Balances on the Network

Major options concerning the fiscal, programming, administrative, and political accountability of the units include:

- state level authorization, review, or approval of key ESA policy decisions regarding: establishment, governance, organization and management, finance, programming, staffing, and facilities

- public LEA authorization, review, or approval of key ESA policy decisions regarding: establishment, governance, organization and management, finance, programming, staffing, and facilities
- general election of members of governing board
- use of general purpose and functional area advisory bodies
- public referenda for approval of establishment, budget, and facilities
- required audits
- required annual reports
- required evaluations

ESA-SEA Relations

Major options concerning coordination and communication of the SEA with ESAs include:

- none
- designation of one SEA unit or office to have primary responsibility for SEA-ESA relationships
- regularly scheduled joint SEA and ESA planning sessions

Major options concerning involvement of ESAs in state regulatory system for LEAs include:

- none
- limited involvement such as planning for the regulation, and its communication and interruption
- extensive involvement such as administration of the regulation, or evaluation of compliance, or both

Major options concerning required SEA evaluations of ESAs include:

- none
- submission of annual or other periodic general organizational evaluations

- submission of annual or other periodic special purpose evaluations

Major options concerning other SEA requirements of ESAs include:

- none
- submission of periodic general organizational plans
- submission of periodic program plans
- submission of periodic fiscal plans
- multi-ESA grouping for special administrative or programming purpose

PHASE IV: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE PLAN

Introduction

Two key planning decisions regarding implementation of the proposed plan to establish a state network of education services agencies must also be made. These are: determination of the legal mode of implementation; and, selection of either an incremental or full implementation strategy.

Determination of Legal Mode of Implementation

Major options include:

- passage of mandatory legislation
- passage of permissive legislation
- issuance of executive order by governor
- action by state board of education
- action by state education agency
- action by regional planning board
- a combination of two or more of the above

Selection of Incremental or Complete Strategy

Major options include:

- establishment of one or more pilot ESAs or cr-ation of the entire statewide network
- incremental or complete use of all proposed organizational features and those relating to programs and services

PHASE V: EVALUATION OF THE STATE NETWORK

Introduction

Decisions regarding a number of key aspects of the evaluation of the state system must also be made. These include: the type of evaluation; what is to be included, who should be involved, and frequency of the assessment.

Type of Evaluation: Self or External

Major options include:

- self-evaluation of the network
- independent assessment of the network
- a combination of self-evaluation and independent audits

What Should Be Included?

Major options include:

- comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of the network (e.g., governance, financing, staffing, programs and services) using comprehensive evaluation strategies (e.g., context, input, process, and product evaluations)
- limited evaluation of selected aspects of the network (e.g., programs and services) using limited strategies (e.g., product evaluation)
- a combination of the two

Who Should Be Involved?

Major options include:

- the state education agency
- another unit of state government
- education service agencies
- all users of the services of the agencies
- selected users of the services of the agencies
- external evaluators

Frequency of the Assessment

Major options include:

- as needed
- annually
- periodically (three-to-five year intervals)

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

A large number of alternative guidelines are suggested in this statement as an aid to planners who wish to consider the establishment of a state network of education service agencies as one widely used way to improve the workings of state systems of elementary-secondary education. The guidelines, by their very nature, emphasize structural arrangements. Most importantly, the major options considered for each of the structural guidelines reflect a value or set of values. Planners in an individual state must ultimately apply their own judgments and their awareness of the contextual features of the state in structuring a system if the network is to be an effective partner in the increasingly challenging goal of providing high quality education to children and youth.